

# DFEH News Brief

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## **CAR RENTAL COMPANY PAYS EMPLOYEE \$70,000 TO SETTLE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION CASE**

Elk Grove, CA – The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) today announced the \$70,000 settlement of a disability discrimination in employment case against Vanguard Car Rental USA, operating as National Car Rental.

The DFEH filed an accusation with the Fair Employment and Housing Commission after receiving a complaint from Sandra Stewart, an employee with a physically disabling condition. Ms. Stewart claimed that Vanguard Car Rental (Vanguard) unlawfully refused to accommodate her disability and refused to allow her to return to work after placing her on an involuntary medical leave of absence.

“The Department of Fair Employment and Housing takes great pride in leading the enforcement of California’s civil rights laws,” said DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng. “This compelling case should remind employers that they must have policies and practices in place that allow employees with a disability to continue working.”

After working for Vanguard for 12 years, Ms. Stewart was diagnosed with a permanent work-related physical condition affecting her mobility. On the same day she settled her workers compensation claim, Vanguard allegedly forced Ms. Stewart to take a year-long unpaid leave of absence, claiming her work restrictions could not be accommodated. According to the accusation, Vanguard ignored her request to be transferred and refused to accommodate Ms. Stewart in another position, stating that as long as she had her medical condition, there would be no place for her in the company. When Ms. Stewart’s involuntary leave expired, Vanguard allegedly refused to honor her many requests to return to work.

As part of the \$70,000 settlement, Vanguard agreed to revise and redistribute its disability discrimination policies, post appropriate DFEH posters at all of its California locations, and provide disability discrimination prevention training to all managers working within California. Vanguard did not admit to any liability in the agreement to settle.

The DFEH asserts that regardless whether an employer intends to discriminate, refusing to reinstate an employee who has been medically cleared to return to work can be costly. “More than ever, given today’s economic challenges, making workplace decisions that comply with the Fair Employment and Housing Act is a good business practice,” DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng stated.

The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.dfeh.ca.gov](http://www.dfeh.ca.gov).

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